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TO: Liam Skinner, Interim Superintendent

FROM: Wendy Crocker-Roberge, Interim Chief Schools Officer

DATE: August 11, 2023

RE: *School Reopening Report*

School and district personnel have worked throughout the summer in preparation for the return of all staff on August 28, 2023, the return of students in grades 1-12 on August 29, 2023, and the beginning of preschool and kindergarten on September 5, 2023. Readiness for school reopening has been monitored in the following areas:

1. Administrative Staffing
2. School-Based Personnel Staffing
3. Facilities Preparation
4. Technology Deployment
5. Curriculum Provisioning
6. Transportation

Administrative Staffing

We have had several school and district administrative vacancies to fill throughout the summer months. To date, we have hired and onboarded five new building principals and are in the process of hiring and onboarding five new assistant principals in the elementary and middle schools:

Principals

- Shaughnessy Elementary School: Dr. Jason McCrevan (from Washington)
- Pawtucketville Elementary School: Michael Munroe
- Wang Middle School: Matthew Steinberg
- Lincoln Elementary School: Kathleen Huntley
- Pyne Arts Magnet School: Lori Lang
- Washington Elementary School: Jeffrey Haines

Assistant Principals:

- Shaughnessy Elementary School: Daroth Yann
- Reilly Elementary School: Maureen Ward-Nault (from Shaughnessy)
- Bailey Elementary School: TBD
- Pyne Arts Magnet School: TBD
- Lincoln Elementary School: Keriann Driscoll
- Daley Middle School: Vitor Alves

Other Building Administrative Positions not yet filled:

- At Lowell High School, the search was reopened for the Associate Head of Schools position after the candidate selected withdrew.
- There is an active posting for the newly-approved Early Childhood Center Coordinator for the Cardinal O'Connell School. Screening interviews are scheduled for this week.

School-Based Personnel Staffing

Beginning July 26th, school leaders have been using a Google Form to communicate biweekly about current vacancies for teacher positions, paraprofessional positions, and other school staff positions. This information is reconciled with the Human Resources Department to ensure accuracy with filling all vacancies. We have significantly reduced the number of open teacher positions since the end of July.

Positions for which there have been small candidate pools have been cross-posted by Chief Operations Officer Dr. James Hall on the district Careers page using TalentEd, on the School Spring recruitment platform, as well as on Indeed.com to generate more robust candidate pools. The greatest challenges with teacher hiring are middle school math and science teachers, special education teachers, and reading/intervention teachers. Principals have coverage contingencies prepared to ensure that a qualified teacher will be in place in each core content area to begin the school year. Additional advertising for hard-to-fill positions has also taken place via the LPS Facebook page.

At the beginning of August, the fill rate of paraprofessional vacancies indicated that there were several dozen positions that had yet to be filled. Many of these vacancies are a result of opening new substantially-separate classrooms for special education in the district and from additional paraprofessional positions that were added to schools from site-based budgeting. In response to this, a Paraprofessional hiring event was created for Tuesday, August 15th from 4:00-6:00 PM for walk-in interviews with HR staff and school administrators. At the time of this report, the social media post for this event was shared 207 times and generated a large amount of online engagement for this event. The timing of the event allowed for two weeks to onboard candidates prior to students returning to school.

Facilities Preparation

Principals have outlined in biweekly reports their facilities needs and the readiness for school buildings to be fully accessible to teachers and staff who wish to begin setting up prior to the Orientation Day. The target date for this is Monday, August 21st. All schools have housed summer programs and additional sites were used following the regular summer school weeks for Acceleration Academies. As such, there are two schools, Bartlett and Morey, that will have a small number of classroom spaces left to clean the week of 8/21. Custodial staff are

being redeployed to assist with schools that are in need of additional support. The Bartlett School is also awaiting the installation of new flooring in the music room and office area and needs tree trimming and pothole repairs to prepare the exterior for reopening. Facilities Director Rick Underwood is handling the coordination of these projects. New lockers are being installed there in November. During the week of 8/21, custodial staff will finish up interior cleaning projects and attend to preparing the exterior grounds for the return of students and staff.

There are two major exterior grounds capital improvement projects that are currently in progress at five schools. There are walkways being installed/redone at the Moody and Cardinal O'Connell locations. Additionally, there is a parking lot/driveway resurfacing project taking place at the Reilly, Sullivan, and Pyne Arts school sites. The paving schedule is on track for completion prior to the reopening of school. Line painting in the new lots may end up taking place much closer to the start of the school year depending on weather and other factors that affect the timeline of the work. DPW and the Facilities Department have remained in close contact with school leaders at the affected schools.

Elevator repairs are necessary for one elevator (Coburn) at Lowell High School and one elevator at the Robinson Middle School. A new company has been secured to perform the repair work and a purchase order for the work is in progress. Lowell High School and the Stoklosa Middle School are also awaiting bathroom repairs that are scheduled.

There is work in progress at the Murkland Elementary School on the electrical panel that is slated to be completed prior to the start of school.

Technology Deployment

Under the supervision of Chief Academic Officer Robin Desmond, the IT Department has been working since spring to set up new accounts and deploy devices to all new staff entering the Lowell Public Schools as well as repairing and provisioning Chromebooks for all students in the Lowell Public Schools and servicing devices for summer programming participants. Devices and accounts are on track for readiness for Day 1 of school notwithstanding any late hires or registrations, which will be done on a rolling basis.

Curriculum Provisioning

Under the supervision of Chief Academic Officer Robin Desmond, the Curriculum Office and Special Education Department have procured several new digital and print curricular resources that have been provided to schools across several instructional areas. The professional development calendar for the 2023-2024 includes several training opportunities for teachers and staff relating to the new curricula. All items are on track for the start of the school year. Curriculum maps have been updated as well.

Transportation

Transportation Director John Descoteaux has provided the following timeline for bus route information and bus passes for the start of the school year:

- **For students in Kindergarten through Grade 4:** Bus passes will be sent via the U.S. Mail on Wednesday, August 23. Families may reach out to the Transportation Department on Friday, August 25 or Monday, August 28 with any route or stop questions or concerns.

- **For students in Grades 5-8:** The Bus Lookup Tool will go live on the district website under the “Parents and Students” → “Transportation” tabs on August 22, 2023 by 4:00 PM. Students and families may look up the routes and bus stop information by using the child’s Student ID (Lunch ID) and their 8-digit birth date (MM-DD-YYYY). Students in Grades 5-8 will **not** receive printed bus passes in the mail.

We are anticipating level service from Pridestar and North Reading Transportation from the 2022-2023 school year and a similar number of buses and routes. A ConnectEd call will go out to parents and families from the Transportation Department ahead of these two key dates.

Conclusion

The reopening of school is a complex endeavor and requires collaboration, frequent communication across a multitude of constituents, physical labor, and problem-solving. We are confident that the Lowell Public Schools is poised for a successful reopening of all schools Grades 1-12 on Tuesday, August 29.

Further descriptors of the Reopening Report can be found in the [Appendix](#).